



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

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EPISCOPALIANS CALLED TO ASSIST CAMBODIANS

NEW YORK -- A call has been issued to "all Episcopalians to give during this Christmas-Epiphany season to the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief to help our suffering sisters and brothers in Cambodia and to pray for their recovery."

The call came from the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. John M. Allin, in a letter to parishes, diocesan bishops, and diocesan representatives for the Fund and for the National Hunger Committee.

Bishop Allin pointed out that while "a spirit of joy, peace and love permeates our lives" during this season, "for the people of Cambodia this Christmas there is no peace or joy, little evidence of love." He said that 2.5 million Cambodians are "caught in the grotesque aftermath of civil war" and are in fact "on the brink of death."

He continued: "The people of Cambodia must be fed for six months, until a rice crop can be harvested. Most Cambodians have only an ounce and a half of rice to eat each day -- not enough to live. They need 180,000 tons of food just to maintain a subsistence diet. Medical supplies, agricultural equipment and delivery vehicles are also urgently needed."

As of December 1, the Presiding Bishop's Fund has given \$66,500 for relief in Cambodia -- or Kampuchea, as it is now officially known. Contributions include \$4,000 in July to UNICEF, \$5,000 in August through Church World Service and the World Council of Churches, \$7,500 in November through the Diocese of Massachusetts/Oxfam for Cambodian transport, and \$50,000 in November through the CWS and the WCC.

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Bishop Allin pointed out in his letter that "more help is needed," and that church and secular relief agencies are trying to raise \$100 million for further assistance.

Principal channeling agencies for the Presiding Bishop's Fund aid are the National Council of Churches' Church World Service, the World Council of Churches and the Christian Council of Asia. Other channels are UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Oxfam of Great Britain.

Food, medicine and other supplies are in fact getting through. Offices are in operation in Phnom Penh to coordinate and monitor the distribution of the supplies.

Through United Nations channels, substantial amounts of food have been released by the U.S. government to private voluntary agencies such as Church World Service. The food is distributed to Cambodian refugees by a joint task force in Thailand.

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PICTURE CAPTION

79378 Infants die every day from starvation in Kampuchea (Cambodia) and 80 percent of the children suffer from malnutrition. Observers returning from Kampuchea tell of seeing "very few children under the age of five years." The principal food crop of this once gentle, lush country is rice. Because of the war, most of this year's rice crop was not planted and the people have eaten the seedlings in order to stay alive. Episcopalians and others may respond to Presiding Bishop John M. Allin's call to contribute "to help our suffering sisters and brothers in Cambodia" through the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. (Photo Credit: Oxfam America).

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